



The Executive Report

WESTERN NAVAJO AGENCY COUNCIL MEETING

Dennehotso, Navajo Nation (Arizona)

MARCH 19, 2011

Mr. Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Council Delegates, Chapter Officials, relatives and visitors. Thank you for allowing me time to speak to the Western Navajo Agency Council. I am honored to be with you this morning to share information on activities the Office of the President and Vice President is currently involved with that impact the Western Agency.

TWIN ARROWS CASINO

As outlined in the State of the Nation on January 24, our administration will focus on creating jobs for our Navajo workforce. On Monday, March 21, we will be breaking ground for the Twin Arrows Navajo Casino near Leupp Chapter. This casino is a part of our plan to further economic prosperity for our Nation and through the development of our infrastructure, many workers from Western Agency will benefit from this project. The local economy will flourish and many of our employees at the Twin Arrows Casino will be Navajo. The Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs, Mr. Larry Echohawk, Council Delegate Walter Phelps, and chapter officials will be joining us at the ceremony.

FEDERAL BUDGET

As you may have read in the news, the federal government is operating under a continuing resolution, which was recently extended another three



weeks. Within this time period, Congress and the administration will negotiate a budget for FY 2011, which is contained in H.R. 1.

At this point, the house passed H.R. 1, and now moves to the Senate for consideration. Once they pass their version, it must go back to the House of Representatives, and both bodies must reach a compromise. All this will happen within the next few weeks. From the Navajo Nation, we are completing our own analysis of HR 1. Our position is to “hold harmless” funding to Indian Country and made this position clear in a letter to President Obama.

Regarding H.R. 1, we are facing a few challenges. At the moment, our primary concern relates to the Navajo Technical College in Crownpoint. In both the CR and H.R. 1, 50% of fund for NTC is de-authorized. Our hope is to remove language in H.R. 1 that de-authorizes NTC. Politically, some in Congress believe on the federal side that funding for NTC and the United Tribes Technical College are earmarks and currently, there is a trend to move away from earmarks.

Two weeks ago, my office sent a letter to the majority leadership within the U.S. Senate expressing our concerns. When I was in Washington, I met with Senator Jeff Bingaman to discuss this issue and addressed White House officials on this matter, including Charles Galbraith, the newly appointed Associate Director of the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, who is also a member of the Navajo Nation. The White House is aware of the proposed cut for Navajo Technical College and has agreed to review the matter. Again, our position is to hold harmless cuts to Indian Country.



Lastly, other areas of concern within H.R. 1 relate to funding for Navajo Agriculture Products Industry, as well as stipulations in H.R. 1 concerning ARRA. In its existing form, H.R. 1 contains language that states any funds that have not been expended by February 11, 2011, will be returned to the federal government. To address this concern, we pulled together our division directors and made them aware of the language. Currently, OPVP is receiving an update on the status of these funds. The positive news is that many of our programs have expended or have committed the dollars. But, we will continue to push our programs to spend their dollars.

ADMINISTRATION & THE NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

Since the reduction of council delegates, the 22nd Navajo Nation Council within the Legislative Branch is reorganizing. So with those efforts of restructuring, I created the Executive Branch Reorganization Taskforce to address cost containment and ensure efficiency within the government. Appointments to this taskforce have begun and we have to look at ways to cut costs and practice financial responsibility.

For short-term goals, the Shelly-Jim Administration established the (SAS) Executive Review Working Group in order to evaluate our internal structure and look at how we can improve the review process. I have heard the complaints and many struggles with the SAS process. We will reform this system and make it work for our divisions and programs in order to provide better service to the Navajo people.

Another opportunity for immediate reform is the Procurement Process. The Division of Community Development along with our chapters, the Department



of Justice, the Judicial Branch, and the Controller's Office have met and discussed the proposed amendments to the Navajo Nation Procurement Act. The Department of Justice is finalizing these revisions and it will be before the Navajo Nation Council soon for consideration. I continue to work diligently with Speaker Johnny Naize to ensure that the tribal council considers the new amendments when it comes before them.

Some long-term goals are infrastructure. With our natural resources we have the capacity for renewable energy, both wind and solar, to develop a comprehensive energy policy. I have appointed Mr. Samuel Woods, my policy advisor, to take the lead in recreating the Energy Development Committee, which will update and coordinate the development of our energy portfolio. Appointments from the Division of Community Development, Natural Resources, Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Justice, and Minerals Department have been made.

A majority of the appointments to my cabinet and within the executive office have been made and is ongoing. Each appointee is under a 90-day review as I evaluate their performance. It is my intention to appoint the best-qualified people with the heart and dedication to assist me in moving our Nation forward.

My office continues to be active in many areas and is open and available to assist in efforts to better the livelihood of the Navajo people. *Ahehee'*.